AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Replacement Claim Set:

1.-2. (Canceled).

3. (Currently amended) An image forming method comprising the steps of:

developing an electrostatic latent image on an image forming body employing a developing agent composed of flattened spheroidal toner particles to form a toner image;

transferring the toner image formed on the image forming body onto a transfer material; and

fixing the toner image on the transfer material by one of a fixing device having a fixing roller having a heating means and a pressing roller, a fixing device having a fixing roller having a heating means and a pressure belt, and a fixing device having a fixing belt entrained between a fixing roller containing a heating means and a first fixing roller and a ~~pressing~~ second fixing roller facing the first fixing roller through the fixing belt,

wherein the flattened spheroidal toner particles satisfy the following conditions:

r_2/r_1 is not less than 0.6 and not more than 1.0;

d/r_2 is not less than 0.1 and not more than 0.5;

r_2 is not less than 5 μm and not more than 20 μm; and

r_1 is not less than 5 μm and not more than 20 μm,

wherein r_1 represents an average length of a major axis of each of the flattened toner particles, r_2 represents an average length of a minor axis of each of the flattened toner particles, and d represents an average thickness of each of the flattened toner particles,

wherein the developing agent is a two-component developing agent composed of the flattened toner particles and carrier particles, each of the flattened toner particles is attached onto the image forming body in the developing step and the transfer material in the transferring step in such a manner that a surface perpendicular to a direction of the thickness of each of the flattened toner particles comes into contact with a surface of the image forming body and a surface of the transfer material.

4. (Previously presented) The image forming method of claim 3, wherein an electric charge is applied to the flattened toner particles by a frictional charging with the carrier particles, each of the flattened toner particles is attached onto each of the carrier particles, and said developing step is conducted in a condition where a surface coverage ratio by a sectional area of a portion perpendicular to the direction of the thickness of each of the flattened toner particles to a surface area of each of the carrier particles is 40 to 80%.

5. (Canceled).

6. (Previously presented) The image forming method of claim 3, wherein the developing agent is a two-component developing agent composed of the flattened toner particles and carrier particles, said developing step is conducted in a condition where the flattened toner particles are attached to latent image portions on the image forming body and where external additives are attached to each of the flattened toner particles, a condition of $|Q'| > |Q|$ is satisfied wherein Q' ($\mu C/g$) represents a charge quantity of the flattened toner particles with the external additives attached thereto and Q ($\mu C/g$) represents a charge quantity of the flattened toner

particles without the external additives attached thereto, and a surface perpendicular to a direction of the thickness of each of the flattened toner particles is attached to a surface of the image forming body.

7. (Original) The image forming method of claim 6, wherein $|Q'| / |Q|$ is not less than 1.1 and not more than 1.5.

8. (Previously presented) The image forming method of claim 6, wherein said developing step is conducted in such a manner that a surface coverage ratio of the external additives to a surface area of each of the flattened toner particles is 50 to 100%.

9. (Previously presented) The image forming method of claim 3, wherein the developing agent is a two-component developing agent composed of the flattened toner particles and carrier particles, said developing step is conducted in condition where the flattened toner particles are attached to latent image portions on the image forming body and where a surface perpendicular to a direction of the thickness of each of the flattened toner particles is attached to a surface of the image forming body while external additives are attached to each of the flattened toner particles, and the following condition is satisfied,

p/r is not more than 10-1 and not less than 5 x 10-3, wherein p represents a diameter of each of the particles of the external additives, r represents a diameter of each of the flattened toner particles.

10. (Original) The image forming method of claim 9, wherein p/d is not more than 3 x 10^{-1} and not less than 3 x 10^{-2},

wherein d represents a thickness of each of the flattened toner particles.

11. (Original) The image forming method of claim 9, wherein an annexing amount of the external additives attached to the surface of the flattened toner particles is 0.1 to 5.0% by weight.

12. (Original) The image forming method of claim 9, wherein second external additives each having a diameter larger than each of said external additives are used with said external additives.

13. (Previously presented) The image forming method of claim 3, wherein the developing agent is a two-component developing agent composed of the flattened toner particles and carrier particles, said developing step is conducted in a condition where a surface perpendicular to a direction of the thickness of each of the flattened toner particles is attached to latent image portions on the image forming body, the flattened toner particles are prepared by flattening-processing of spherical polymerization toner particles, and in a particle size distribution of the spherical polymerization toner particles for use in preparing the flattened toner particles, more than 80% of the spherical polymerization toner particles satisfy the following expression,

$1/2\ d_o/d_o\ (M)\ 2$

wherein d_o represents a diameter of each of the spherical toner particles, and d_o (M) represents an average particle diameter of the spherical toner particles.

14. (Original) The image forming method of claim 13, wherein more than 95% of the spherical polymerization toner particles satisfy the following expression,

$1/2 < d_o/d_o\ (M) < 2.$

15. (Previously presented) The image forming method of claim 3, wherein the developing agent is a two-component developing agent composed of the flattened toner particles and carrier particles, said developing step is conducted in a condition

where a surface perpendicular to a direction of the thickness of each of the flattened toner particles is attached to latent image portions on the image forming body, and in a ratio distribution of a thickness d to a diameter r of each of the flattened toner particles, more than 80% of the flattened toner particles satisfy the following expression,

$1/2 < (d/r) / (d/r)\ (M) < 2$,

wherein (d/r) (M) represents an average ratio of the thickness d to the diameter r of the flattened toner particles.

16. (Original) The image forming method of claim 15, wherein more than 95% of the flattened toner particles satisfy the following expression,

$1/2 < (d/r)/(d/r)\ (M) < 2$.

17. (Currently amended) An image forming method comprising the steps of:

developing an electrostatic latent image on an image forming body employing a developing agent composed of flattened spheroidal toner particles to form a toner image;

transferring the toner image formed on the image forming body onto a transfer material; and

fixing the toner image on the transfer material by one of a fixing device having a fixing roller having a heating means and a pressing roller, a fixing device having a fixing roller having a heating means and a pressure belt, and a fixing device having a fixing belt entrained between a fixing roller containing a heating means and a first fixing roller and a ~~pressing~~ second fixing roller facing the first fixing roller through the fixing belt,

wherein the flattened spheroidal toner particles satisfy the following conditions:

r_2/r_1 is not less than 0.6 and not more than 1.0;

d/r_2 is not less than 0.1 and not more than 0.5;

r_2 is not less than 5 μm and not more than 20 μm; and

r_1 is not less than 5 μm and not more than 20 μm,

wherein r_1 represents an average length of a major axis of each of the flattened toner particles, r_2 represents an average length of a minor axis of each of the flattened toner particles, and d represents an average thickness of each of the flattened toner particles,

wherein the developing agent is a single-component developing agent composed of the flattened toner particles, each of the flattened toner particles is attached onto the image forming body in the developing step and the transfer material in the transferring step in such a manner that a surface perpendicular to a direction of the thickness of each of the flattened toner particles comes into contact with a surface of the image forming body and a surface of the transfer material.

18. (Previously presented) The image forming method of claim 17, wherein an electric charge is applied to the flattened toner particles by a frictional charging between a developing sleeve and a pressing member in a developing device, each of the flattened toner particles is attached onto the developing sleeve in a condition where the surface perpendicular to the direction of the thickness of each of the flattened toner particles comes into contact with a surface of the developing sleeve, and said developing step is conducted in such a manner that a surface coverage ratio by a sectional area of a portion perpendicular to the direction of the thickness of each of the flattened toner particles to a surface area of the developing sleeve is 60 to 120%.

19. (Canceled).

20. (Previously presented) The image forming method of claim 17, wherein the developing agent is a single-component developing agent composed of the flattened toner particles, said developing step is conducted in condition where the flattened toner particles are attached to latent image portions on the image forming body and where external additives are attached to each of the flattened toner particles, a condition of |Q’ | |Q| is satisfied wherein Q’ (μC/g) represents a charging amount of the flattened toner particles with the external additives attached thereto and Q (μC/g) represents a charging amount of the flattened toner particles without the external additives attached thereto, and a surface perpendicular to a direction of the thickness of each of the flattened toner particles is attached to a surface of the image forming body.

21. (Original) The image forming method of claim 20, wherein |Q’| / |Q| is not less than 1.1 and not more than 1.5.

22. (Previously presented) The image forming method of claim 20, wherein said developing step is conducted in such a manner that a surface coverage ratio of the external additives to a surface area of each of the flattened toner particles is 50 to 100%.

23. (Previously presented) The image forming method of claim 17, wherein the developing agent is a single-component developing agent composed of the flattened toner particles, said developing step is conducted in condition where the flattened toner particles are attached to latent image portions on the image forming body and where a surface perpendicular to a direction of the thickness of each of the flattened toner particles is attached to a surface of the image forming body while external additives are attached to each of the flattened toner particles, and the following condition is satisfied,

p/r is not more than 10^{-1} and not less than 5×10^{-3},

wherein p represents a diameter of each of the particles of the external additives, r represents a diameter of each of the flattened toner particles.

24. (Original) The image forming method of claim 23, wherein p/d is not more than 3×10^{-1} and not less than 3×10^{-2},

wherein d represents a thickness of each of the flattened toner particles.

25. (Original) The image forming method of claim 23, wherein an annexing amount of the external additives attached to the surface of the flattened toner particles is 0.1 to 5.0% by weight.

26. (Original) The image forming method of claim 23, wherein second external additives each having a diameter larger than each of said external additives are used with said external additives.

27-30. (Canceled).

31. (Previously presented) An image forming method comprising the steps of:

developing an electrostatic latent image on an image forming body employing a developing agent composed of flattened spheroidal toner particles to form a toner image;

transferring the toner image formed on the image forming body onto a transfer material; and

fixing the toner image on the transfer material by one of a fixing device having a fixing roller <u>having a heating means</u> and a pressing roller, a fixing device having a fixing roller <u>having a heating means</u> and <u>a</u> pressure belt, and a fixing device having a fixing belt <u>entrained between a fixing roller containing a heating means and</u>

a first fixing roller and a ~~pressing~~ second fixing roller facing the first fixing roller through the fixing belt,

wherein the flattened spheroidal toner particles satisfy the following conditions:

r_2/r_1 is not less than 0.6 and not more than 1.0;

d/r_2 is not less than 0.1 and not more than 0.5;

r_2 is not less than 5 μm and not more than 20 μm; and

r_1 is not less than 5 μm and not more than 20 μm,

wherein r_1 represents an average length of a major axis of each of the flattened toner particles, r_2 represents an average length of a minor axis of each of the flattened toner particles, and d represents an average thickness of each of the flattened toner particles, wherein said fixing step comprises:

forming an electric field in the fixing device in such a manner that a surface perpendicular to a direction of the thickness of each of the flattened toner particles comes into contact with a surface of the transfer material; and

fixing the flattened toner particles attached to the transfer material thereon while applying pressure to the transfer material.

32. (Previously presented) The image forming method of claim 31,

wherein said developing step comprises repeating of the developing of the latent image to form toner images,

the image forming method further comprising the step of superimposing the toner images on the image forming body to form a color toner image,

said transferring step comprises transferring collectively the color toner image formed on the image forming body onto the transfer material.

33. (Previously presented) The image forming method of claim 31,

wherein said developing step comprises developing each of latent images formed on respective image forming bodies of plural image forming units which are arranged on an intermediate transfer body to form toner images, in which different colored toners are contained in each unit,

said transferring step comprises transferring and superimposing successively the toner images formed on the respective image forming bodies onto the intermediate transfer body to form a color toner image, and then transferring collectively the color toner image onto the transfer material.